

ATLAS



by PAUL MONTPELLIER

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ATLAS

written and illustrated by
PAUL MONTPELLIER

Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd.
1987

500 75070 06138 A8 1987

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Published by

Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd.

P.O. Box 219

Madeira Park, BC

Canada V0N 2H0

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Montpellier, Paul, 1949 –
Atlas

ISBN 0-920080-10-3

I. Title.

PS8576.065A8 1987 jC813'.54 C87-091391-3

PZ7.M65At 1987

Printed and bound in Canada

ATLAS

The rain hit the window with soft pats. Atlas watched the water drip from the roof and run in rivers down the road. He wanted to go outside, but one of his gumboots had a big hole in it. He had bought a pocketful of gumballs to patch the boot, but the gum wouldn't stick very well.

"Maybe this isn't gumboot gum," said Atlas, as he examined one of the gumballs. He turned from the window with a sigh and wandered around the living room. The big globe of the world stood on the table. Atlas admired its gleaming surface as he slowly spun it around.

"Here's North and South America," he said. "Over here is Europe, and below is Africa. There's Asia, and there's Australia, and way down here is Antarctica where the penguins live."



Atlas took one of the gumballs out of his pocket. "This gumball looks like a little globe of the world," said Atlas, popping it into his mouth. "I'm chewing up the planet—chomp chomp." Atlas settled into the big rocking chair and chewed his gum, dreaming about the world.

Atlas began to blow a bubble as he thought about Australia. There were deserts in Australia. There were forests and rivers, and the Great Barrier Reef. Atlas' bubble grew bigger and bigger. It was yellow. There were a lot of strange animals in Australia—koala bears and duck-billed platypusses and of course there were kangarooOOOOOOS!

The rocking chair shuddered and shook and bounced in the air! Atlas looked down in amazement. He was sitting in the pouch of a big red kangaroo. The kangaroo took Atlas for a ride around the room. He crouched in the pouch, his bubble wobbling in his mouth, as they bounded past the desk with the globe of the world. The kangaroo leaped on the sofa and jumped up and down. The sofa groaned and creaked.





The kangaroo sprang into the air and Atlas touched the ceiling. The kangaroo took an enormous leap, a monster jump, clear across the room.

Atlas pitched from the pouch, and his bubble burst in midair. He tumbled onto the carpet and rolled into the kitchen. Lying on the floor, he stared back into the living room. The rocking chair was lying on its side. The kangaroo was gone.

"Fantastic!" shouted Atlas. "I blew a bubble and thought about Australia, and the rocking chair turned into a kangaroo!"

Atlas leaned back against the stove, pushed the gum against his teeth with his tongue, and gently blew. This time the bubble was bright red. Atlas watched the bubble and thought about Asia. Asia had the Himalayan Mountains, and pagodas, and the Great Wall of China. The stove was getting hot! Atlas scurried away and turned to stare at the stove.





Bang! The oven door popped open like a big tongue and smoke poured into the kitchen. The burners of the stove were glowing red eyes. The stove rumbled and rocked. There was a booming ball of fire and a huge Chinese dragon hung in the air, scowling down at Atlas and his magic bubble. The dragon flew around the kitchen like a whirlwind, his great scaly tail smashing pots and pans from the shelves. Faster and



faster he flew, until Atlas was hot and dizzy. The dragon blew clouds of smoke and geysers of steam. He rolled his eyes, he roared and thundered. Lightning scorched from his nostrils. Atlas yelled in alarm, bursting the red bubble. The dragon exploded with a bang and a shower of sparks. Atlas was flushed and sweating.

"It must be a million degrees in here!" he cried. He scrambled to the refrigerator and opened the door. The icy air streamed out, cooling his hot skin. Atlas puffed out his cheeks and sighed in relief. A bubble rose from his lips, wobbly, and white as snow. Atlas opened the freezer compartment and stuck his head inside.

"This freezer is as cold as Antarctica," he said. "This freezer is as cold as the South Pole!"





The ice cubes popped out of the ice trays as an icy mist swirled around Atlas. The ice cubes grew into ice mountains, into towering glaciers. Atlas stared up at them in awe as the snow flew, the wind shrieked, and everywhere it was ice white and ice cold!

"This is too chilly for me," muttered Atlas. "But I'd like to see at least one penguin before I leave."

Atlas saw something in the distance that might have been a penguin, but perhaps it was only the popsicle he had saved in the back of the freezer. I'll be a popsicle myself in a minute, he thought and decided to let the air out of the bubble.

Nothing happened! The bubble was frozen solid, and the snow was falling harder than ever. Atlas' teeth chattered. He ran in circles, huffing and puffing, and flapping his arms. I wish I'd remembered to wear my mittens, he thought as he scrambled across the ice.

Then Atlas slipped and slipped, and tripped and fell. The frozen bubble hit the ice and smashed into pieces. Atlas was back on the floor of the warm kitchen, lying in a small puddle of melting snow. He slammed the door of the refrigerator and gathered up the bits of frozen gum. He stuffed them back into his mouth and trotted upstairs to the bathroom. Atlas needed a hot bath to get the chill of Antarctica out of his bones. Soon he was soaking in steaming, soapy water, wiggling his toes, and chomping his bubble gum.



"I'll try another bubble," he said, and puffed out his cheeks. The bubble he blew was big and blue. Blue as the sky, and blue as the sea! The bathtub melted away and Atlas was splashing about in the middle of the ocean. The walls of the bathroom were gone, the ceiling was gone, overhead the sun was shining in the wide blue sky and all around was water—water—water.

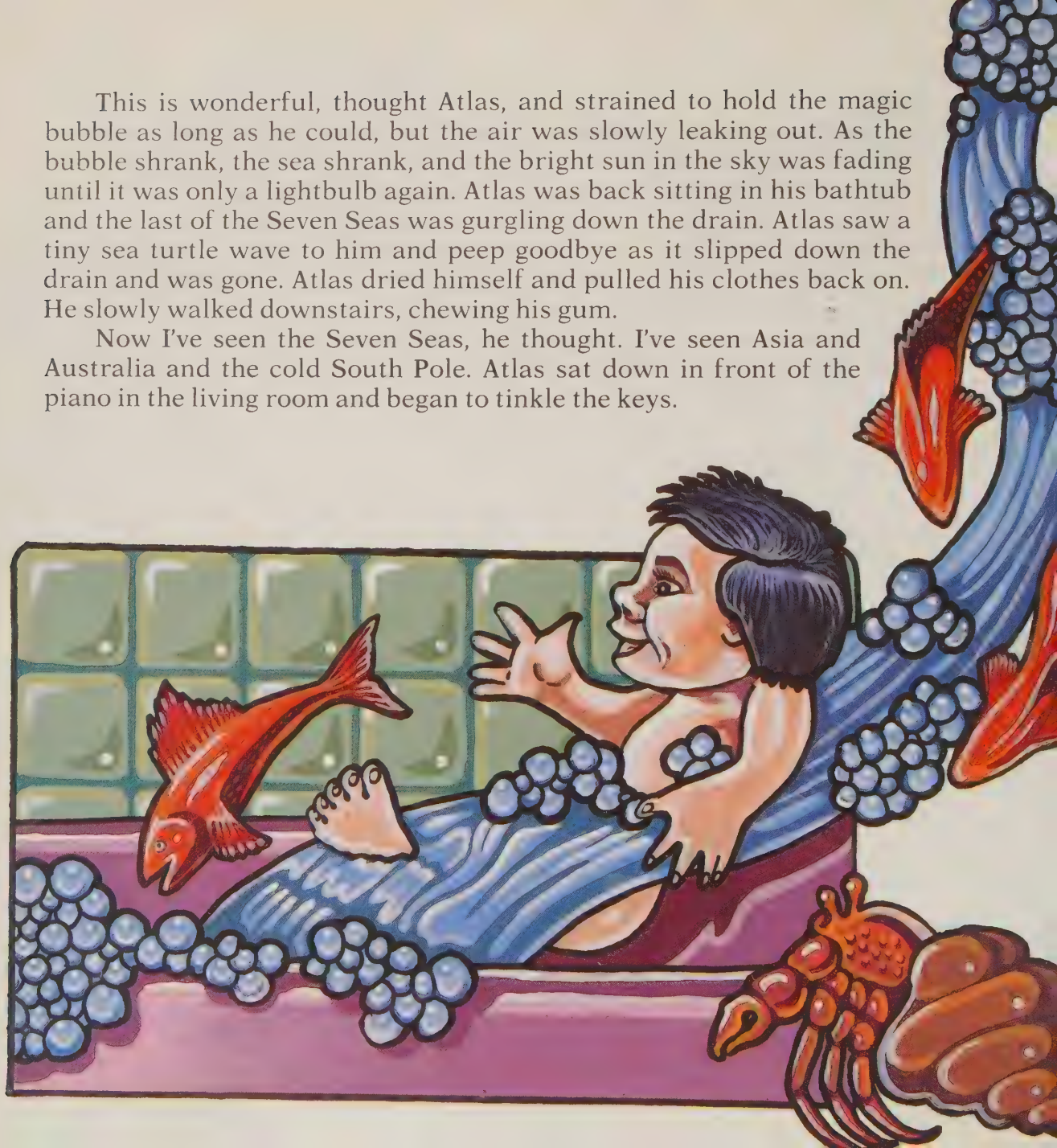
I'm swimming the Seven Seas, thought Atlas with delight, rolling onto his back and kicking his feet. Fish and seals splashed around him in rainbow swirls. A huge whale rose up out of the sea, rolled its eyes and blew a long stream of coloured bubbles into the air. Atlas saw a green sea turtle shoot past. Overhead, seagulls swooped and called down at him.





This is wonderful, thought Atlas, and strained to hold the magic bubble as long as he could, but the air was slowly leaking out. As the bubble shrank, the sea shrank, and the bright sun in the sky was fading until it was only a lightbulb again. Atlas was back sitting in his bathtub and the last of the Seven Seas was gurgling down the drain. Atlas saw a tiny sea turtle wave to him and peep goodbye as it slipped down the drain and was gone. Atlas dried himself and pulled his clothes back on. He slowly walked downstairs, chewing his gum.

Now I've seen the Seven Seas, he thought. I've seen Asia and Australia and the cold South Pole. Atlas sat down in front of the piano in the living room and began to tinkle the keys.





"Where will the next bubble take me?" he wondered. Taking a deep breath, he blew a large bubble. It was a deep green colour. Atlas banged on the ivory keys of the piano as he watched the bubble. Ivory comes from Africa, he thought. Africa has the Sahara Desert and deep, green jungles filled with lazy lions and leaping leopards. Africa has crocodiles with croco-smiles, and giraffes, and . . . elephants!

The doors of the piano top banged open like big ears as the piano began to tremble and shake. The piano legs grew as fat and sturdy as tree trunks, and the piano keys curled into gleaming white tusks. A long trunk snaked out and tickled Atlas's nose. An enormous elephant was



standing in the living room, the floor creaking under its weight. The elephant was growing bigger by the second. Its broad back pressing against the ceiling made the house sway and groan.

If this elephant decides to go for a walk, thought Atlas, it's taking the house with it. He was being squashed into a corner by the huge beast. Atlas's magic bubble mashed against his face and popped with a loud wet *snap!*

There was bubble gum stuck to his eyebrows, his nose and his chin. There was even some in his ear. Atlas scraped most of the gum off his face and back into his mouth. He was very relieved to find that the elephant had retreated back in to the piano.



Atlas walked into the kitchen for a drink of water. How many continents are left, he wondered as he turned on the faucet. Atlas remembered South America. South America has the great rain forests and the Andes mountain range. Atlas watched the water run into the sink as he slowly began to blow another bubble. There are some big rivers in South America, he thought, watching the water splash into



the sink. One of the biggest rivers in the world is in South America—the Amazon! The water burst out of the faucet in a flood. Atlas leaped onto the breadboard and was whirled away down the mighty river. The coffee beans from the kitchen sprouted big leaves along the shore, banana trees sprang up and bright orchids bloomed in the branches. Atlas drifted along on his breadboard raft. He heard monkeys chattering





at him from the tall trees. A jaguar drinking at the river's edge looked up with bright green eyes, water dripping from its whiskers. Atlas saw red and gold parrots fluttering in the jungle, chasing butterflies. A bright hummingbird zipped out from the trees and hovered in front of Atlas, eyeing his bubble with great interest.

Maybe he thinks it's a flower, thought Atlas. The hummingbird darted forward and dipped its long beak into the bubble. There was a loud *pop!*—and Atlas was sitting on the breadboard, back on the kitchen floor. There was a small fly buzzing near his nose.

"Shoo!" said Atlas, and the fly flitted away.

"These continents keep sneaking up on me," said Atlas, getting to his feet. He opened all the kitchen cupboards and found a large saucepan.

"I think I'll visit Europe next, but this time I'll plan a bit before I blow the bubble. Europe is where the Knights of the Round Table live.



The pantry doors flew open and carrots and celery sticks poured out onto the floor. The kitchen chairs began to prance and whinny as the vegetables leaped into the saddle. Atlas was surrounded with knights in armour, all jousting madly at each other in clouds of dust. If I'm going to see them I'll need a helmet." He put the saucepan on his head. "This pan lid will make a good shield, and this wooden spoon will be my sword. Now I'm ready," said Atlas, and blew a bright orange bubble.



Atlas jumped on a prancing chair and rode back and forth, banging away with his spoon as knights rolled in the dust and others cheered. A giant knight with a head like a turnip crashed into Atlas, who rolled on the ground. "Oof," said Atlas, "I *hate* turnips!" *Pop!* went the bubble.

Atlas was back on the kitchen floor, his saucepan beside him; surrounded by piles of chopped-up vegetables. "Perhaps I'll make a salad tonight," he said as he piled the diced carrots and celery back into the cupboards. "A *big* salad," he decided, as he crammed the last few bits into a drawer.

"That was fun," said Atlas, walking back into the living room. He stood in front of the globe of the world and slowly spun it around.

"Now let me see," said Atlas. "I've visited six continents. That leaves North America. There are lots of interesting places in North America," he said as he chewed his gum. "There are big trees and rivers and the Rocky Mountains."





Atlas gave the gum a good chewing and began to blow a bubble. North America has rocket ships, he remembered, and trips into outer space. Atlas's bubble was as clear as glass. The globe of the world seemed to shrink. The room darkened. Atlas's bubble grew until it covered his entire head. It's like a fish bowl, he thought—or a space helmet.

Atlas rocketed up into the sky. He looked down at the world, floating in the dark starry night, and up at the fat yellow moon. Far, far away, Atlas could see Venus and Mars and the swirling world of Jupiter.



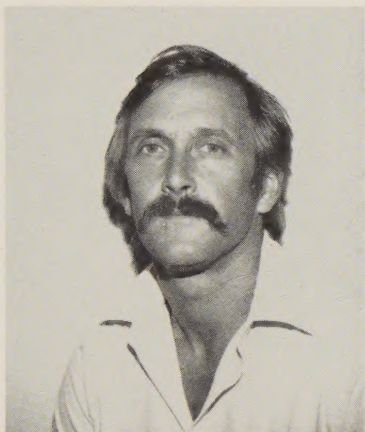
"Hooray," cheered Atlas, as he watched a comet shoot sparkling into the Milky Way. Atlas's helmet was shrinking and he felt himself begin slowly falling. The earth grew huge as Atlas tumbled down. He landed on the carpet with a bump in front of the globe of the world.

"I was in outer space," marveled Atlas. "I was an astronaut!" He scrambled to his feet and blew another bubble, thinking hard of outer space. Nothing happened.

"Oh, no," he sighed, "I've chewed all the magic out!" Atlas took the gum out of his mouth. It looked worn out and wilted. Suddenly he grinned, reached in his pocket and pulled out a handful of fresh gumballs.

"This one looks like the moon," said Atlas excitedly, "this red one looks like Mars, and this big one with the rings looks just like Saturn!" Atlas put the gumballs back in his pocket and walked happily upstairs to bed. Perhaps it would rain again tomorrow.





PAUL MONTPELLIER was born in Vancouver in 1949. He trained at the Calgary Art School and since then has been both an artist/illustrator and a set designer. Since 1977 he has worked as a tree surgeon for the Vancouver Parks Board. He is married, with one son.

The aim of *Atlas*, his first book, is "to interest children in the world outside their own environment and the pleasures involved in imagination and bubblegum."



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AEJ6186
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DATE DUE

APR	1	1991	
RECEIVED	MAR 28	1991	
MAY 15	1991		
RECEIVED	APR 29	1991	
MAY 21 1993			
RECEIVED	JUL 28	1993	
NOV 23 1994			
RECEIVED	NOV 16	1994	
JAN 19 1995			
RECEIVED	JAN 05	1995	



A pocketful of gumballs
takes Atlas to the seven continents of the
world . . . and even into outer space!
PAUL MONTPELLIER lives in Vancouver
with his wife and their small son. This is
his first book.

HARBOUR PUBLISHING

ISBN 0-920080-10-3



08-CHZ-366

